



A QUARTER OF A MILLION LAKES

When you have a quarter of a million lakes all containing some type of fish, you're bound to please every type of fishing enthusiast. And that's just what Ontario does. From deep water trolling, to watching a bobber, to fly fishing, to casting from shore or into weedbeds, or dropping a line through the ice, Ontario's lakes offer some of the greatest variety of fishing opportunities found anywhere in the world.

Ontario has shallow lakes with pike, deep lakes with trout, weedy lakes with bass and muskie, muskeg lakes with perch and pike, and rocky lakes with walleye. There are lakes with all of these species, and more. Lake fishing in Ontario can take you to northern lakes so remote they've barely been touched by man. Or you can be just an hour and a half from downtown Toronto, catching perch and trout in Lake Simcoe.

Fishing in Ontario's lakes is a year-round sport. By January most of the lakes are frozen enough for fishing through the ice. Winter fishing lasts until March — longer in the north. By May and June the season for all species except bass is open, and the fishing is good right through until mid-fall.

It's the variety of lakes — and the variety of fishing experiences — that makes Ontario a special place to fish. The clean, cold and crystal-clear lakes carved out of the Canadian Shield are a type of lake offering a rare, wilderness fishing experience.

Shield lakes, found across the north and parts of eastern Ontario, are some of the deepest lakes in North America. Some good examples are Lake Temagami, Lake Nipigon, and Big Trout Lake in northwestern Ontario. Cold, deep waters provide the ideal habitat for lake trout. The fish grow slowly in these lakes, but trophy-size lakings of 20 to 30 pounds are not uncommon. The average catch is about six pounds — perfect for eating. Because lake trout prefer deeper water, it's necessary to use heavy tackle and wire line or downriggers in the summer, but in the spring you'll find lake trout in shallower water closer to shore.



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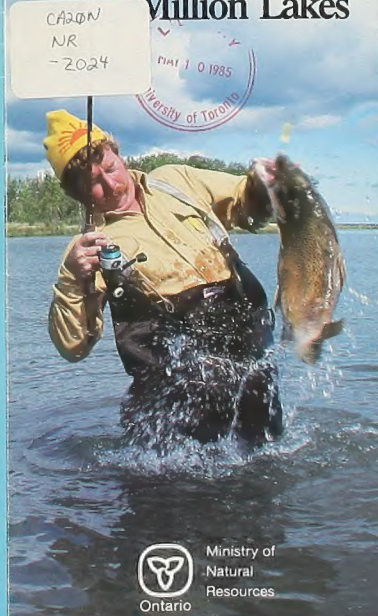


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FISHING Ontario's Quarter Million Lakes



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The smaller, coldwater Shield lakes are often more likely to contain brook trout than lake trout. Brook trout lakes are scattered across northern Ontario and are especially common in the Algonquin Park area, the Hudson Bay estuaries and around Lake Nipigon.

Fishing in Shield lakes is a unique experience for most anglers. The water is so clear you can look down from your canoe or boat — sometimes to depths of 60 feet — and watch schools of fish swim by. Often the only sound you'll hear is the lap of water on the shore, or the splash of the fish when you land one. On some lakes it's possible to fish all day and never see another boat. In such perfect wilderness surroundings it's easy to leave the rest of the world behind.

And at the fly-in fishing camps that's exactly what you do. Flying-in is the only way to reach many of the lakes across the north. Modern air services fly out of many northern communities — Sault Ste. Marie, Wawa, White River, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, and North Bay are just a few — to whisk you to one of dozens of prime fishing lakes.

There are some lakes and lodges accessible only by train. You can take the Polar Bear Express from Toronto all the way to Moosonee on Hudson Bay. Or the Algoma Central railway will drop you off at remote lakes in the Sault Ste. Marie-Wawa-White River area. It's easy to book a package wilderness fishing holiday through a travel agent, or by contacting the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation.

Muskie Lakes are also found across the north, right up to the Hudson Bay lowlands. These low-lying lakes, heavily fringed with vegetation, are typically found with brownish-coloured waters — ideal living space for pike and walleye.

Pike, sometimes called Great Northerns, prefer shallow, cool waters and are right at home in muskie lakes. They're voracious eaters, most likely to be found in shallow bays where they can count on an ample food supply. These fish are fighters, providing a lot of fast action. The record pike catch for Ontario came out of Delaney Lake near Kenora, weighing in at a mammoth 42 pounds, two ounces, but the average catch is from six to eight pounds.



Large shallow, cool water lakes — originally carved out of rock by glacial action — are found throughout the province. Mink Lake near Pembroke, Rainy Lake and Lake St. Joseph in northwestern Ontario are typical of this lake type. These lakes have irregular shorelines, contain lots of rocky shoals and are home to a plentiful offering of walleye, whitefish, herring and pike.

Walleye (yellow pickerel) are found in many types of lakes — but the shallow, cool water lakes are their favorite habitat. Walleye aren't known as fighters, but they are delectable to eat and attract a devoted following of anglers. Walleye are the largest of the perch family, going up to over 20 pounds with the average catch in the three-pound range. Dusk is a good time to fish for walleye, when they come in from the deep water to feed at river mouths, gravel shoals and island shorelines.

Some lakes have both cold and warm water areas, providing habitats for various types of fish. These large lakes — like Lake Simcoe, Lake Nipissing and Lake Nipigon — have shallow, warmer waters around their shorelines attracting perch, walleye and bass, and pockets of deep, colder water toward the middle more suited to lake trout, whitefish, ling and herring.

Lake Simcoe attracts more fishermen year-round than any other inland lake in Ontario. This popular lake supports a wide range of fish and is an easy drive from anywhere in southern Ontario. Bass, pike, walleye, muskie, trout, perch and carp are just some of the species found here.

Lake Simcoe is also well known for winter fishing, especially for lake trout and perch. And every spring, the annual smelt run draws thousands of people. For three weeks in April the shores are lined with enthusiastic smelt fishers of all ages, scooping up the tiny, tasty fish right off the beaches.

After the smelt run is over, it's time for the annual Orillia Perch Festival. One of the largest in the province, the festival lasts for two to three weeks and takes place at Atherley Narrows, on the northeast shore of Lake Simcoe.



The shallow, warm water lakes of southern Ontario combine both good fishing and easy access. There are more lakes up north, but the large, muddy-bottomed, weedy and warm southern lakes support a greater variety of fish. Bass, perch, muskie, rainbows, and walleye are just some of the more popular species found here. There are also lots of panfish in these lakes for the kids to catch, and carp and catfish are plentiful.

Prime areas for lake fishing in southern Ontario are the Kawartha near Peterborough, Lake Simcoe, Lake Scugog, Lake St. Clair, the Rideau Lakes, and lakes in the Haliburton region.

Largemouth bass prefer the shallow, warmer waters of the southern lakes. They are usually found in the weed beds and stumps along low-lying shorelines. These tasty fish are commonly found throughout southern Ontario with the exception of Algonquin Park.

The feisty smallmouth bass is also very much a southern Ontario fish, but don't forget that good numbers are also common across the north, especially in the Temagami, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay and Kenora regions. Use light tackle with this fish — they run to about six pounds — and try water near rocky shelves, in channels, around fallen trees, and over shoals in open bays and lakes.

The legendary muskie is another fish found in both the southern lakes as well as further north. Like the pike, the muskie is a voracious eater and prefers heavily vegetated, shallow waters. Fishing for these fighters is a slow process requiring patience, but the results are worth the wait.

Lake St. Clair, Lake Scugog, and the Kawartha are good areas to try for muskie. These highly-prized fish generally weigh from five to 36 pounds, measuring 28 to 48 inches. But there are reports of 80 to 100 pounders being spotted. Anglers come back year after year in anticipation of hooking a trophy fish and maybe breaking the record.



Ontario's lakes offer an exceptional variety of fishing experiences, and a wide range of fish management programs are helping to keep it that way. Private angling clubs and the provincial government are working together to maintain a healthy and thriving sport fishery. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is stocking lakes with walleye, brook trout, lake trout and muskie. There are numerous lake trout programs including the improvement of existing spawning beds and the creation of new ones. Riverbeds and shorelines are being cleaned up and improved. Many clubs are assisting Ontario conservation officers to guard against over-fishing and poaching.

Everyone can contribute to good fishing by being aware of — and following — Ontario's fishing regulations and catch limits. Every season is different so be sure to look up the guidelines in the Fishing Regulations Summary published by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

IF YOU WANT MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO ENJOY FISHING IN ONTARIO'S LAKES, write to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Fisheries Information Branch, First Floor, Whitney Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3, or telephone (416) 965-7883.

For detailed information on particular areas refer to the District offices listed in the Fishing Regulations summary.

And for advice on where to stay and how to get there, call the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation toll free: from Canada (except Yukon and N.W.T.)... 1-800-268-3735; from New York State... 1-800-462-8404; from continental U.S.A.... 1-800-828-8585.